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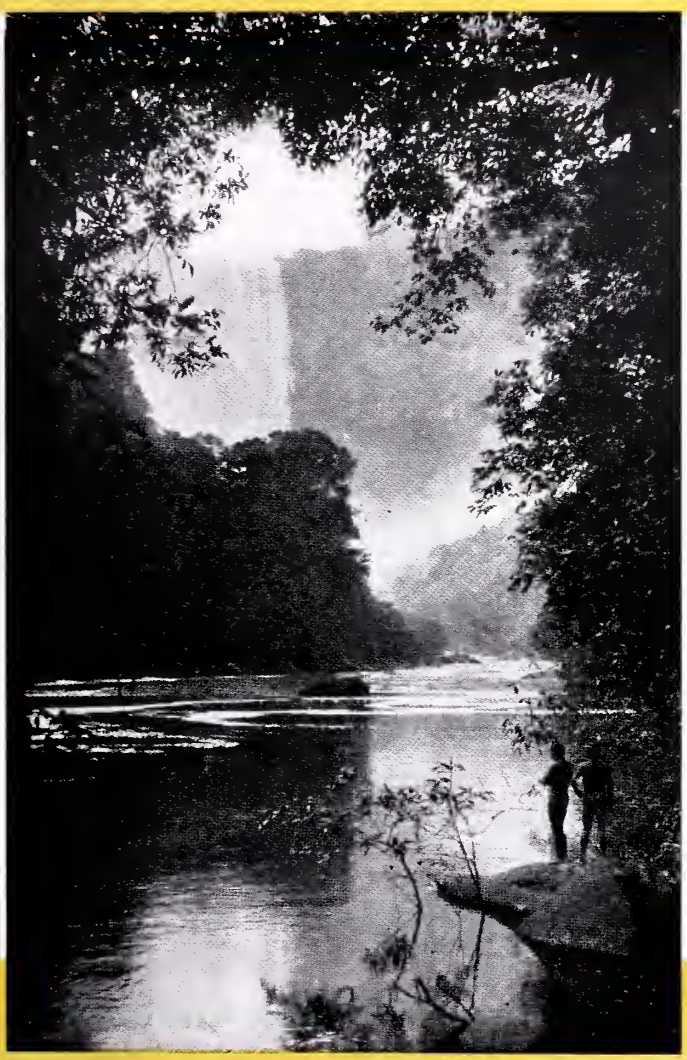
# THE UNITED LUTHERAN CHURCH IN BRITISH GUIANA



KAIETEUR FALLS, BRITISH GUIANA

[1942?]

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# THE LUTHERAN CHURCH IN BRITISH GUIANA

EDITED BY MRS. C. T. BENZE

British Guiana is located on the northeast coast of South America and is ruled by a governor appointed by the British Crown. The area of the country is 90,000 square miles with a population of about 300,000. The population is made up of aborigines, Africans whose ancestors were imported for cheap labor, and another group who were brought from British India to work on the large sugar plantations. These latter live in large colonies and are not easy for the religious forces to reach.

"British Guiana is made up of three countries, Essequibo, Demerara, and Berbice. It is known in trade circles as Demerara. All three countries were at one time separate colonies and were all originally settled by the Dutch. The Spaniards never made a settlement in Guiana on account of the hostility of the cannibals. In 1595 Sir Walter Raleigh directed attention to the Guianas by his ill-fated expedition in search of El Dorado, the mythical City of Gold.

"The first settlement was made in Essequibo by the Dutch in 1620, in Berbice in 1624, and in Demerara in 1745. In 1781 the three settlements were won by the English, the next year by the French, and the next year they were again restored to the Dutch who held them until 1796 when they were again won by the English. In 1802 they were once more restored to the Dutch; in 1803 the English came into final possession."

Just as British Guiana is divided politically into belts, so it is divided topographically into three belts. First comes the "mud flat" along the coast, extending from ten to twenty miles inland, and it is here that the great bulk of the population lives. Georgetown, its capital, is on the Atlantic Ocean, New Amsterdam, its other large city, is on the Berbice River. Along this river cluster the majority of our Lutheran stations. Since most of this land is below sea-level, the mosquito and its accompanying malaria are prevalent.

Behind this mud flat is a belt of higher land, slightly above sea-level, where the Dutch first established their villages and the plantations of sugar, coffee, and cocoa. All that is now left of these once fruitful places are heaps of bricks, perhaps a few old tombs, and the jungle has again claimed its own. Back of this belt are found the great natural wonders of the colony: lofty mountains, rushing cataracts, mighty falls. Diamonds and gold are abundant and it is here that the future greatness of the colony will doubtless be found, once roads are opened and resources developed.

In this belt we find the wonderful Kaieteur Falls, several times the height of Niagara, the world's highest major fall, with a perpendicular drop of 741 feet, and a cataract of 81 feet, making 822 feet in all. At present, it is so difficult of access, that few undertake the three-day trip overland; no doubt plane travel to this beautiful spot will in time make it better known.

## Not Latin America

The question is often asked, "Why do the Mission Study books on Latin America make no mention of the Lutheran work in British Guiana?" The Rev. H. H. Kunkle of the U. L. C. A. Mission in British Guiana explains:

"If you want to know what a West Indian or a Caribbean people might be like, we will suggest a recipe, somewhat as follows: take a base of 80% Negro population, with a dash of 10% East Indian (in certain sections more, in some none at all), add a tiny dash of aboriginal Indian, possibly 1%, and sprinkle with 9% white blood, the latter itself a mixture of British, Dutch, French, Portuguese, Spanish and Danish, and mix thoroughly with a swizzle stick which we shall call the tropics, and the result is an exotic and interesting population which deserves to be called West Indian or Caribbean, and nothing else, and which seems to be slowly developing toward its own distinct type—a combination of all the above. The United States itself is not as great a melting pot of races as is the West Indies. And we repeat—*British Guiana is West Indian.*

"Do you make the mistake of associating British Guiana either with an island in the South Pacific, or with Latin America? British Guiana is in South America, but it has little, if anything to do with *Latin* America. The people here are Afro-Indian—ancestors from Africa and India chiefly."

## The People

Tropical agriculture requires a large and cheap labor supply and the peoples of British Guiana have been gathered from the ends of the earth. The Chinese and Portuguese did not take kindly to agriculture and soon became the small provision and rum-shop owners of the country. Africans originally brought were slaves, and East Indians were the best agriculturists. Today, most of the Chinese and Africans are at least nominally Christian; the East Indians are Hindus and Mohammedans, many have also been converted to Christianity.

In addition to these are the aboriginal Indians, the Arawaks, some 8600 in number, who live in and around Ituni. Across the Berbice River is an Indian reservation, a place upon which no one but an Arawak, a pastor, or a goverment official may set foot.

Tropical conditions are responsible for the poverty, illness, ignorance and laziness so apparent to the tourist. But when these Guianese become truly Christian, even these handicaps do not deter them from helping to support the church, and working for it. This last is literally true—money is so scarce, that often the only contribution that can be made is that of time and labor.

*The Indians travel in their dugout canoes, or corials*

## Modes of Transportation

For years the only way of getting to the Berbice River mission stations was by the river-steamer which is owned by the railroads of British Guiana, and makes one trip a week up the river and back, a distance of 104 miles in 16 hours to the point "Paradise." Here one must land in order to get to Ituni, five miles farther by outboard motor. The Indians themselves travel in their dugout canoes, or corials, and for them to attend church at Ituni means a whole day and night to paddle. To reach New Amsterdam from Georgetown requires four hours to go the 63 miles along the coastal railway.

Through gifts of congregations and the Women's Missionary Society of Maryland, Virginia, and Central Pennsylvania, a motor launch has been provided for the Berbice River trips and this will be a marvelous advance on the former mode.

*The cabin cruiser, "Maryland," sent to British Guiana in July, 1942*

## The Churches of British Guiana

"When the British took possession of the Colony in 1803, there were only two Churches in the country. One was the Lutheran Church in Berbice and the other a Dutch Reformed Church on Fort Island.

"With the entrance of the British, the Dutch Reformed ceased in the Colony, so that only the Lutheran Church can date its origin to the old Dutch times.

"In 1740 Dutch Lutherans established their church in Paramaribo, Dutch Guiana. The church is still functioning.

"In 1807 the London Missionary Society sent out their first missionary to this Colony at the request of the godly planter. To the London Missionary Society credit must always be given for the first successful work among the slave population of British Guiana.

"In 1810 a building called St. George's Church was opened in Georgetown, in which the service was performed according to the liturgy of the Church of England as by law established.

"In 1815 the Wesleyans commenced their operations in Georgetown and succeeded in establishing a Church in that place.

"In 1819 St. Andrew's Church for the professors of the faith of the Church of Scotland was opened in Georgetown. This Church, along with the Church of England, was intended for the European colonists, who, during their temporary sojourn here as planters, merchants, lawyers, and doctors, all had a common interest in upholding the system of slavery and who were in no wise interested in the spiritual welfare of the slave.

"In 1823 there arose an insurrection among the slaves of British Guiana. The blame for this was laid upon the Missionary activities of the London Missionary Society. In 1824 there was a movement put on foot to exclude them from the Colony and establish a 'sufficient supply of sane men' of regularly ordained state-church clergymen. It was resolved therefor to select and endow a particular order of clergy, whose position as paid servants of the State should be a security for their behavior.

"Thus arose the state-church idea as it has been maintained in British Guiana.

"In 1921 a kind of disestablishment was brought about by assigning interest-bearing government bonds to the different churches: The Church of England; The Church of Scotland; The Church of Rome; The Wesleyan; The Moravian; The Lutheran; The Salvation Army."

*Six Years in Hammock Land*—White.

A friendly contact was established again, after a lapse of many decades, with the Lutheran Church in Paramaribo, Dutch Guiana, our neighbor and ally to the east. The pastor of this large congregation, Dominie D. A. Hoekstra, visited New Amsterdam during the year, and Pastor and Mrs. Kunkle

spent a little time in Paramaribo in July, 1941. In times past, when both were Dutch establishments, or with Dutch influence, the congregation in Berbice helped rebuild the church in Paramaribo after a disastrous fire, and the congregation in Paramaribo helped keep alive the congregation in New Amsterdam (Ebenezer) when the latter was for many years without a resident pastor, by sending their own pastor over here by sea to supervise the work. Without that the work in British Guiana likely would years ago have disappeared entirely.

## The Lutheran Church

The date of the organization of the Lutheran Church in Berbice is October 15, 1743, hence, Ebenezer Church in New Amsterdam will soon celebrate its bi-centennial, the oldest Lutheran Church on the continent of South America, except the Dutch Lutheran Church in Paramaribo, Dutch Guiana, which is three years older.

The first century of the Berbice Lutheran Church closed as the last resident Dutch Lutheran vacated his pulpit about the year 1843.

The next twenty-five years witnessed a period of deterioration and the church nearly died out. Some of its unfaithful vestrymen practically handed it over to the Wesleyans, who having enjoyed control for almost twenty-five years tried to obtain the property in its entirety and were then invited to leave, not without disagreeable complications. Then the vestry invited the Rev. John Sanders, minister of the Lutheran Church in Paramaribo, to serve them in addition to his own parish, a trip of 500 miles by steamer along the coast. He came, reopened Lutheran services, confirmed new members and recommended that the vestry call the Rev. J. R. Mittelholzer, a Guianese Negro, then serving a Congregational parish. After having gone to Paramaribo to receive confirmation in the Lutheran Church, Mittelholzer was called in 1878 to become the pastor of Ebenezer Church, which he served until his death in August, 1913.

*Rev. J. R. Mittelholzer, Pastor of Ebenezer Church, New Amsterdam, 1878 to 1913.*

In 1890, Mittelholzer made the long journey to petition the East Pennsylvania Synod for admission. The Synod voted to receive Mittelholzer and congregation and helped to support his work. After his death, the Church and its mission on the Berbice River were transferred in 1915 to the Board of Foreign Missions of the General Synod, and in 1918 became the British Guiana Mission of the United Lutheran Church in America.

Pastor Mittelholzer was a fine representative of his race who did valiant work here for Christ's Kingdom and the Lutheran Church. His memory lives on, and so does his work.

## Lutheran Schools

With the exception of New Amsterdam and Germania, the river stations have parochial schools which are supported to the extent of about two-thirds by the Government Grant-in-aid of the Education Department. At both St. Lust and Ituni, a special Indian teacher instructs the children in aboriginal Indian arts and crafts. Self-support is a very real and difficult problem. The question of inter-racial and religious relationships is also a complex one but the Christian workers are co-operating helpfully in matters of common interest.

## Languages

It is said that British Guiana is the only country in the world where all the great racial divisions are largely represented in the population—white, red, brown, yellow and black men; Europeans, Indians, Hindus, Mongolians, and Negroes, besides a mixture of all these races. They live together peaceably as a rule, but both Negroes and East Indians resent what they consider unfair white privileges, and the Negroes are fearful of the growing economic power and professional prestige of the East Indians, (who easily outnumber all other races), as there are about 136,000 East Indians to 127,300 blacks.

English is the official language in British Guiana, but there is a great mixture of many other tongues and dialects in common use. The East Indians and Asiatics and Arawaks use their own language among themselves.

## Major Industries

Industries are four in number: sugar and rice culture, production of bauxite (aluminum) and lumber. Sugar is the chief factor in the life of the colony. It has brought to these shores the European, the African, the East Indian, the Chinese, and the Portuguese.

## Mission Activities

In New Amsterdam there is a work shop for manual training now used by the government educational authorities, and a print shop which is very vigorous called "The Southern Press." In addition to doing much work for

*Rev. and Mrs. Paul O. Machetzki, with their children, Corina, Pablo and Carola. The Machetzkis began their work in New Amsterdam in 1937.*

the community at large, the press will soon make available for use a small British Guiana Hymnal containing about 70 hymns, Confession and Absolution, the Holy Communion, Matin, Vespers, devotions and prayers. The poorer people cannot afford the Common Service Book, and this book is to be used in the ten new fields now operating or about to be started where no Lutheran book has been used. Where the Common Service book is in use, the smaller book will not be introduced.

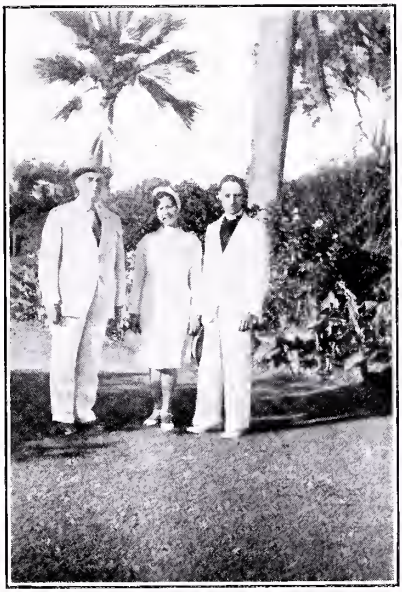
A bi-monthly Bulletin is also issued by the Mission which is intended to develop a greater feeling of unity, and to convey news of world-Christian and world-Lutheran fellowship. It has a circulation of about five hundred. A number of copies are sent abroad to twenty-four States of the U. S. A., to four Canadian provinces, to India, and to Dutch Guiana.

*Cecelia Seecharan, an East Indian girl, member of the Lutheran Church in New Amsterdam.*

## Missionaries

There are at present two ordained missionaries, only one of whom usually stays on the field while the other is on furlough. There is urgent need of two resident missionaries if the work that has been developing so rapidly within the last five years is to go on.

With the ordination of two East Indian pastors, both sons of the Mission, in 1936 and 1937, the work has moved rapidly forward. These are the Rev. Aubrey R. Bowen, of the Georgetown Parish, educated at Wittenberg College and Hamma Divinity School, and the Rev. Patrick A. Magalee of the Berbice



*Dr. Samuel Trexler, President of the Foreign Mission Board, with Rev. and Mrs. Howard R. Kunkle, Missionary at New Amsterdam, British Guiana.*

River Parish, who received his training at Carthage College and Gettysburg Seminary. Both of these men are ably assisted by their wives, like themselves from British Guiana.

A noteworthy layman is Mr. Hector C. Magalee. He is business manager of the Mission, manager of the Lutheran Press, secretary-treasurer of the vestry of Ebenezer, a Sunday school teacher, a worker in the boys' club, a lay reader, a splendid Christian. His wife, the sister of Rev. Aubrey R. Bowen, is office secretary of the Mission, worker in the girls' club, Children of the Church,

*Laying corner stone of St. Thomas Chapel, Lochaber, 1940. Pastor Patrick A. Magalee laying the stone, Missionary Kunkle in background.*

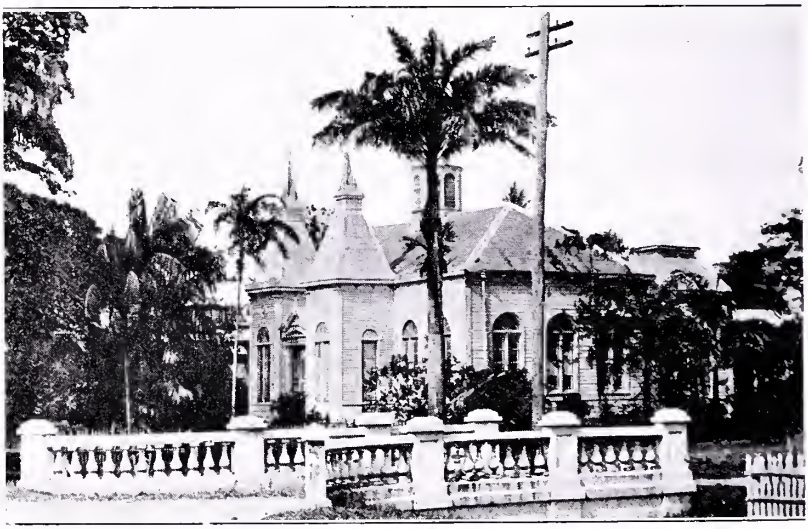
*Hector C. Magalee, who is Business Manager of the Mission and helps in many other ways. Mrs. Magalee stands beside him.*

*Pastor and Mrs. A. R. Bowen, Georgetown.*

Sunday school, Senior Choir, Lutheran Women's League of Ebenezer. She serves on Sunday mornings at the Sunday school, Mt. Sinai at Vryheid.

In addition there are eight catechists and eight lay readers. A catechist is a full time servant of the church who is in charge of a station or stations and acts as pastor except for administering the sacraments, confirming and performing marriages. A lay reader is one engaged in some secular activity, but who gives his spare time to conducting services and preaching under the direction of the pastor.

Why then two missionaries, a pastor and 16 workers to care for 21 small congregations and preaching places? The answer is transportation. Suppose the superintendent of the Mission wishes to visit Sand Hills, the newest station, on a Sunday. Sand Hills is a settlement up the Demerara River, hardly 100 miles from New Amsterdam. It takes a day to go to Georgetown on the railroad. The tired little train may make as many as thirty stops in the seventy miles. It will be necessary to wait until the next day, which will be Saturday, to travel up the river—and there is no way of getting to this settlement except by river steamer which reaches there Saturday about noon. On Monday morning when the steamer returns down the river to Georgetown, the pastor must wait until Tuesday to return to New Amsterdam by railroad. A round trip of 200 miles, but a visit to Sand Hill takes at best some five days.



*Ebenezer Church, New Amsterdam. Congregation organized in 1743.*

Or take the case of the Berbice River Parish, served by Pastor Patrick Magalee. He too lives in New Amsterdam. His most remote congregation—Mt. Carmel at Ituni—is about 110 miles away. Not bad with decent roads and an automobile. But there are no roads, and of course no automobile. There is only the river steamer, which makes the trip from 7.30 A. M. to 11 or 12 P. M. Yes, that's sixteen hours for 100 miles.

## Stations and Preaching Places

A. NEW AMSTERDAM PARISH, the Rev. Howard R. Kunkle, Missionary.

Ebenezer Church of New Amsterdam is the mother church, and in 1943 will celebrate its bi-centennial. The congregation is composed of Creoles and East Indians. Among the latter, Catechist Paul Masih Das conducts a Hindi Service every Sunday, the only one in the whole country. The Common Service is used, translated by the Catechist. Many of the people sit on the floor, and the music is furnished by natives using instruments. But it is very reverent, and the Catechist intones the entire service, as is the Indian custom. The attendance is small but important as this is the only church that has regular Hindi services. The Hindi is the basic language of India and understood by the majority of India's people.

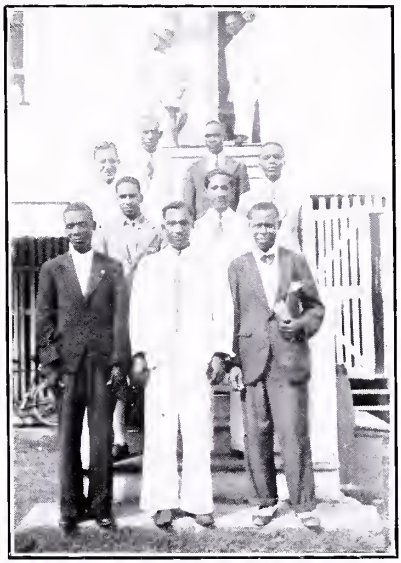
In addition outdoor evangelistic services are conducted by this capable and well trained Catechist once or twice a week, mostly in Hindi, with some use of English. They are held in court yards, around which rows of tenement rooms are built. The people sit on the ground using native hymns and listen to a short sermon. The missionary often takes part in these services, as it is the only way to reach many Hindu and Moslem people with the Gospel. Ebenezer has an active Luther League, the only other one is at St. Paul.

ST. THOMAS CHAPEL, LOCHABER, a sugar estate village, belongs to this parish—a school building which has a chancel and becomes thus a chapel on Sunday. Services are in charge of a pastor, catechist or lay readers and Sunday school is conducted by workers from Ebenezer Church. The majority of the people are East Indian, the rest Negroes.

VRYHEID. A Mohammedan gentleman, Wajadally Khan by name, has given the Lutheran Mission a piece of land on a 99-year lease, at nominal rental, for the purpose of erecting a chapel or Sunday school building in the village of Vryheid, near New Amsterdam. The lot is directly across the road from Wajadally's house. His unsolicited gift is much appreciated. Until the chapel can be built, a small house has been rented in the village.

The Rev. Howard R. Kunkle reports for the Mission during 1941: "Seven new full-time workers were added to our local staff—catechists and teachers. This implies expansion. During the year eight new preaching places were opened in different sections of the colony, Betsy Ground, Williamsburg, and

*Paul Masih Das, who conducts a Hindi service every Sunday in Ebenezer Church, New Amsterdam.*



*Commissioned lay readers.*

*Musical instruments used in the Hindi service.*

Bush Lot are in Berbice County along the coast, all primarily East Indian missions. Ma Retraite up the Berbice River is also chiefly Indian, and is a revival of a work once conducted but then dropped. The other new preaching place on the Berbice River is at De Velde, and this is among a fine group of colored people. In Demerara County there was Sand Hills up the Demerara River, which is a Negro mission; La Penitence, adjacent to Georgetown which is a mixed group and a branch work of Epiphany Church, and Triumph on the coast east of Georgetown, which is East Indian.

"The number of organized congregations increased from seven to ten. The preaching places that became congregations during the year are St. Thomas at Lochaber, St. Patrick at De Velde, and St. Andrew at Le Ressouvenir. That means we now have ten congregations and eleven unorganized preaching places, or a total of twenty-one places where regular Christian work is carried on."

B. BERBICE RIVER STATIONS

The Rev. Patrick Magalee, three full time catechists, and lay readers are in charge of these stations, and now that a launch has been provided by the Board, the work will no doubt take on added impetus.

FEARN is a poor village of fewer than 100 souls, but needing the Gospel badly. There is an elementary school and a church, and the people are loyal. It is thirteen miles up the river and can be reached only by boat.

GERMANIA, ST. CLEMENT CHURCH. This is a Negro village 25 miles up the river in a dismal, economically abandoned village. There is no school. This too can be reached only by boat, but it has taken on new life under Pastor Magalee.

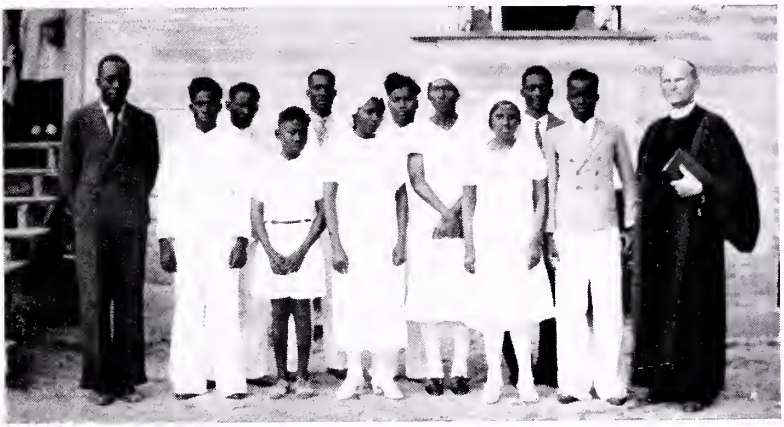
ST. LUST, MT. HERMON CHURCH, has a resident catechist-teacher with two assistant teachers and has the largest school, but not the largest congregation. The population is chiefly Negro, with a few Arawak Indians. Some aboriginal handicraft is taught. The pastor gets to this church about once in two months but the resident catechist conducts all services.

MARIA HENRIETTA, ST. PAUL CHURCH, is the oldest congregation, and the second largest congregation of all of our British Guiana Lutheran Churches. Maria Henrietta is a settlement about one hundred miles from New Amsterdam. There is no village there, nor at St. Lust nor Ituni—just a vague center of population for people who live along the river for miles in each direction, and whose only means of getting to church is by corial, their native canoe. The people are a higher type and the response is better. The school, however, is smaller than St. Lust. The compound includes a well-built church, a satisfactory rest house for the pastor, a catechist's house, and the school.

This compound by the river bank, beneath a few stately palms, has possibilities of being one of the loveliest spots on the river.

ITUNI, MT. CARMEL CHURCH. This is an almost purely Arawak congregation, situated attractively on an island formed by the confluence of the Ituni creek and the Berbice River. Mt. Carmel congregation is a center of hope for the approximate 200 souls in the area. On the island compound is the new church, the school, the catechist's house, and a rest house for the pastor. Guest house and school are of native construction. Here Pastor Magalee spent seven weeks with his bride, supervising the erection of the new church made possible by the 1940 Epiphany Appeal. In the meantime, the upper river churches have received more pastoral care than they ever got before.

A severe epidemic of malaria with malnutrition swept through this community in October and November, 1941. Our Church and Government cooperated in fighting it. The school building was turned into a hospital with



*Catechist Lewis and class confirmed by Rev. Paul O. Machetzki who stands at right.*

one hundred and twenty hammocks slung in it. Eight of our school children died. The chief cause of this disease was diet-deficiency. A Dormitory was erected recently to house twenty children. Better food, medical care and health training will become the means of preserving the remnants of Arawak Indians on the upper Berbice River.

Even with a resident teacher-catechist and all this effort, the response is slow. Without the Church's work here these people would be little better than pagans. As it is, some really fine characters are being developed.

KIBILIBIRI, HOLY CROSS MISSION. The most distant of our preaching places—about 125 miles from New Amsterdam—is the end of human habitation on the river. Beyond that are only monkeys and parrots and temporary lumber camps. The mission is still in a transition state. But by the petition of the people work was established where it now is, and a teacher sent there. Services were held in the native house. The people, mostly Arawaks, are few but they need Christianity.

C. THE GEORGETOWN PARISH

This parish is in charge of the Rev. Aubrey R. Bowen, one catechist, and lay readers. It might well be called the Demerara parish for it has grown beyond the limits of Georgetown city. Up to 1938, there was no Lutheran work in this important section. At the end of 1940, there were four preaching places. The Church of the Epiphany was erected in 1941, through the response to the Epiphany Appeal of the Foreign Mission Board. This work is largely among the East Indians, and has spread to a nearby suburb, Lodge Village, where a Sunday school has been established. This church, as yet without its permanent home, is known as Messiah. The Mission has purchased a fine piece of land, and has a remodeled cottage as a chapel.

The Lutheran Church is the only Christian Church in British Guiana that serves the East Indian population in Hindi. That is why this work of ours in British Guiana is so important. The British Guiana Mission is trying to secure catechisms and Bibles and tracts from our India Mission in the Hindi language.

BEL AIR, is a sugar-estate village four miles from Georgetown. This point is served by Catechist Singh. When a private school lost its teacher by death, the people appealed to the Lutheran Church which had been holding outdoor evangelistic services, to take over the school building for services. A modest equipment is under way, and when a school building can be erected, it will be an effective arm to this work. There are about 35 children in the Sunday school.

LE RESSOUVENIR is another sugar-estate village five miles away, with its St. Andrew, a congregation without a building. There are 300 people in this village. They live in squalid rows of rooms built end on end, usually of corrugated metal and floored with mud. The people are gathering funds to help build a chapel—if only there were equipment, the work could develop. There are 40 children in the Sunday school.

CHATEAU MARGOT is another sugar-estate village, adjacent to Le Ressouvenir, of the same type—only smaller and poorer. Here there is a Sunday school of 30, and there is not even a shed in which to worship. The last three churches have been neglected because they are not promising enough, and they do need the Gospel. The Lutheran Church is doing its best to give it to them, even with poor and shabby equipment.

The report for 1941 shows there are now ten congregations and eleven unorganized preaching places, or a total of 21 stations where work is carried on. There are a dozen fields that could be entered if means and the men were available. If the church at home will give its support it is certain that a substantial indigenous church can be established.

## Future Needs

This leads to the next topic—more trained native workers, which means *training courses* for catechists, and at least *two* missionaries on the field, with others to replace them as they go on furlough.

Institutional work is also needed, such as a home for the aged or a home for children, or better still *both*. A health center and an industrial school are much to be desired.

The appropriation of $1,000 a year, voted by the General Convention of the Women's Missionary Society held at Des Moines in 1940 and beginning with the fiscal year 1941, has been a real factor in the program of expansion.

## Items from Various Sources

"The bells in British Guiana that summon the people to church were once the bells that summoned slaves to their daily drudgery on the plantations, and now ring out joyously along the upper reaches of the river to summon free Christian brethren to come and make the Lord's Name glorious. Listen carefully, friends, to the ringing of the Mission bells of Rio Berbice and help us *keep* them ringing. Once their tones are silenced, the jungle of sin and sorrow and the blackness of the slavery of bush-rum and obeah will settle down and engulf all vestiges of what has been so splendidly begun."

*The Lutheran*, March 19, 1936, W. T. B.—

*Arawak congregation. The man with the beard is the Catechist.*

"We need church and chapel bells badly. People have no clocks, and the only way they know when it is church time, is through a bell. We could use ten bells for present chapels and those under construction. In many places in the U. S. A. abandoned country school houses and even farm houses, have small bells not being used. They would serve us nicely. Would you ask the Church through the magazines or any other means, for such bells? We hope that shipping costs would be prepaid. These would be most acceptable gifts. We do need them, but to buy them is impossible."

### The Practice of Obeah

A species of witchcraft called Obeah, is common among the Negroes. Its efficacy is attributed to some infernal supernatural agency. It signifies every pretended assumption of supernatural power or knowledge whatever for fraudulent or illicit purposes, or for gain, or for the injury of any person. The paraphernalia usually consists of a human skull or some other part of the human body, taken either *before* or *after* death. The penalty for practicing is imprisonment and flogging for men and solitary confinement for women, yet still the practice continues to an alarming degree, and all sections of the population are under its sway.

### The White Swan

Atop the spire of Ebenezer Church, as on other Dutch churches in the colonies, is a white swan. Tradition says that when John Huss was about to be burned at the stake in Prague, Bohemia, in 1415, he said, "You are now about to roast a goose ('hus' in Czech means 'goose') but a century later there will come a swan whose voice you will not still." One hundred and two years later Luther's voice was heard, so the swan is the symbol of Luther and the Gospel voice of the Reformation.

### Who Works for Whom?

There is a local code regarding types of work. Few East Indian women will work as house maids, but they will work cutting grass along the streets for the city authorities. Most of the gardeners are East Indian men. Nearly all the house maids are Negroes or colored girls. And of course, no white man or white woman is expected to do any physical work. Only "crazy Americans" occasionally break loose and do something as ridiculous as that!

—*The Foreign Missionary*, March, 1941.

### Kites for Easter

Easter is the central Christian festival in British Guiana. Perhaps in a true religious sense, it is the chief date of the Christian calendar in other countries also. Certainly in Canada, Christmas would appear, socially and commercially speaking, the most important. Indeed, to a Christmas-conscious Canadian like myself it came strange to find with what comparatively little celebration Christmas is observed. Apart from the whites, it may be said that

Christmas is almost a purely religious festival in British Guiana. The poverty of the people, moreover, does not, of itself, explain the lack of present-giving and conviviality. The reason lies, I think, in the indifference with which both Blacks and East Indians regard birthdays. Most of them do not know what a birthday or a birthday party means. In fact, it is only the odd one who knows or cares when he was born. If you ask the average child when his birthday is or how old he is he gazes blankly at you; or if pressed, mentions any age that comes into his head. Thus one boy about twelve told me, quite seriously that he was three; another, who looked six, guessed he was twenty-eight.

If, because of this, the birthday of our Lord does not receive the amount of attention it does in other countries, it cannot be reported that Easter is neglected. True, the Easter rabbit and his eggs are not known, but in place of this they have a much more colorful and meaningful custom—the flying of kites.

On Easter Monday I motored up the Corentyne—a country district some fifty miles long—and if I saw one kite I saw ten thousand. Every man, woman and child was flying a kite or several of them. Some houses, too, had five or six tied to the fence or verandah post. Not only that, but the telephone wire, spider-like, had caught hundreds of these gay-winged flies in their web, and every tree blossomed with dancing kite-leaves.

After Good Friday the people busy themselves making kites of all sizes, shapes and colors. Some even draw or paint upon them such things as the Cross, the open tomb, Calvary's hillside, angels, doubting Thomas, napkins, nails, disciples running, and so on. Early Monday morning they are out and fly their kites the day long.

This is not a meaningless procedure. Bishram explained it to me. "You see, Sahib, our Jesus go heaven 'n w'en we tink all ugly tings we do Him on erf, we like His going home be nice so we mek de air beautiful wi' dese kites, sorts a' spreadin' flowers 'n de air like palms befo' Him wen He go Jerusalem, 'den Sahib, dis day Jesus rise, our Spirits rise too, so we send 'em up wi' our kites."

To make beautiful the way of their risen Lord—to show how soar their gladdened hearts—for this they fly their kites on Easter Day. Night falls—they loose their hold upon the strings—and all the kites fly toward the sky; flowers of earth sent up by the children of God in gratitude to Him whose Rose of Sharon makes a garden in the soul of man.

—*Glints of Guiana*, by James Dunn.
Canadian Presbyterian Mission, New Amsterdam,
British Guiana, 1938.

## Our Missionaries in British Guiana

| Name | Period of Service |
|---|---|
| The Rev. M. H. Stine, Ph.D., D.D. | 1914 — 1914 |
| Rev. Ralph J. White, D.D. | 1916 — 1923 |
| Mrs. Ralph J. White | 1916 — 1923 |
| Rev. Meade A. Rugh | 1920 — 1921 |
| Mrs. Meade A. Rugh | 1920 — 1921 |
| Rev. Harlow E. Haas | 1923 — 1927 |
| Mrs. Harlow E. Haas | 1923 — 1927 |
| Rev. Robert H. Daube | 1927 — 1935 |
| Mrs. Robert H. Daube | 1927 — 1935 |
| Rev. Paul M. Counts | 1930 — 1932 |
| Mrs. Paul M. Counts | 1930 — 1932 |
| Rev. W. Theodore Benze | 1935 — 1936 |
| Mrs. W. Theodore Benze | 1935 — 1936 |
| Rev. Paul O. Machetzki, D.D. | 1937 — still serving |
| Mrs. Paul O. Machetzki | 1937 — still serving |
| Rev. Howard R. Kunkle | 1940 — still serving |
| Mrs. Howard R. Kunkle | 1940 — still serving |

## Sources: Used by permission

*Reports of the Board of Foreign Missions.*

*Six Years in Hammock Land*, by Ralph D. White. Price 55 cents.

*The Foreign Missionary.* Articles by the Rev. Howard R. Kunkle published from March, 1941, to the present. May be ordered from the Board of Foreign Missions, 18 E. Mt. Vernon Place, Baltimore, Maryland.

Few direct quotations are given as it was necessary to change the wording of originals slightly in order to make the narrative consistent.

*Glints of Guiana*, by James Dunn, Canadian Presbyterian Mission, British Guiana. Not available.

## Additional Material

*A Pastor Wings Over South America*, by Samuel Trexler. Cloth $1.25; paper 75 cents.

*South American Facts.* Free.

*Enemies.* Leaflet—free.

*South America Gives Thanks.* Program. Price 10 cents; 3 copies, 25 cents.

*The Baron Who Sent Himself.* Leaflet. Price 2 cents.

Unless otherwise noted, material may be ordered from the Education Division of the Women's Missionary Society.

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